

Message Text

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47

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 CIEP-01 EB-07 COME-00 JUSE-00 SEC-01

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R 090917Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1447

INFO AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

CINCPAC HONOLULU

COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 11951

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, JA

SUBJECT: OHIRA AND FUKUDA PUBLICLY JOIN FORCES

REF: TOKYO 11883

SUMMARY. OVER THE WEEKEND PRIMIN MIKI VOICED DETERMINATION
TO RESIST LDP PRESSURE TO RESIGN, BUT FINMIN OHIRA'S
PUBLIC JOINING ON NEXT DAY WITH DEPUTY PRIMIN FUKUDA IN
CALLING FOR A "FRESH START" FOR LDP HAS OMINOUS PORTENTS
FOR MIKI'S TENURE. IT IS NOT CLEAR PRECISELY HOW FUKUDA
AND HIS NOW PUBLIC ALLY OHIRA WOULD MOUNT THEIR CHALLENGE
TO MIKI, BUT THEY SEEM CONFIDENT AND DETERMINED TO SUCCEED.
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END SUMMARY.

1. AFTER ATTENDING ATOMIC BOMB MEMORIAL SERVICES IN HIROSHIMA ON AUGUST 6, WHERE HE CALLED FOR A WORLDWIDE BAN ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS, PRIMIN MIKI TOLD REPORTERS HE WAS DETERMINED, DESPITE MOUNTING PRESSURES, TO REMAIN IN OFFICE. BEFORE CONSIDERING RESIGNATION, MIKI SAID HE INTENDED TO CONCLUDE THE LOCKHEED INVESTIGATION, CALL A SPECIAL SESSION OF THE DIET TO PASS IMPORTANT PENDING BUDGET-RELATED LEGISLATION AND REVISE THE RULES FOR ELECTING AN LDP PRESIDENT -- AND PRIME MINISTER. THE PRESS ALSO REPORTED MIKI'S MEETINGS WITH LDP EXECUTIVE COUNCIL CHAIRMAN NADAO AND WITH LDP POLICY RESEARCH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN MATSUNO IN AN EFFORT TO FIND A WAY TO MEDIATE WITH ANTI-MIKI ELEMENTS WITHIN THE LDP.

2. BUT THE MAIN EVENT DURING THE WEEKEND OF AUGUST 7-8 WAS FONMIN OHIRA'S PRAISE FOR LONGTIME RIVAL (AND DEPUTY PRIMIN) DUKUDA. WHILE ON A SPEAKING TOUR OF HIS DISTRICT IN KAGAWA PREFECTURE ON AUGUST 7, OHIRA SAID HE AGREED WITH FUKUDA THAT IN THE WAKE OF TANAKA'S ARREST A "FRESH START" WAS NECESSARY FOR THE LDP AND HINTED BROADLY THAT MIKI SHOULD RESIGN AFTER THE MAIN PHASE OF THE LOCKHEED INVESTIGATION IS COMPLETED AND BEFORE THE SPECIAL DIET SESSION IS CONVENED. OHIRA ADDED THAT HE THOUGHT FRANK TALKS BETWEEN HIMSELF AND FUKUDA ON A "SUPRA-FACTIONAL BASIS" DESIRABLE AND NECESSARY.

3. COMMENT. OHIRA'S REMARKS ARE CLEARLY THE OPENING SALVO OF A DETERMINED FUKUDA-OHIRA EFFORT TO UNSEAT MIKI AS REPORTED EARLIER. ALTHOUGH OSTENSIBLE RIVALS, FUKUDA AND OHIRA HAVE LONG BEEN TALKING PRIVATELY. BUT OHIRA'S PUBLIC STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR HIS "ARCH-RIVAL" MARKED AN IMPORTANT NEW -- AND FOR MIKI OMINOUS -- STEP. OHIRA REPORTEDLY FELT UNABLE TO MAKE THIS MOVE EARLIER BECAUSE OF HIS LONGSTANDING ALLIANCE WITH TANAKA AND THE TANKA FACTON. TANAKA'S ARREST, HOWEVER, REMOVED AT A STROKE OHIRA'S OBLIGATORY (IN JAPANESE TERMS) TIES OF LOYALTY TO TANAKA PERSONALLY. THE ARREST ALSO ANGERED MEMBERS

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OF TANAKA'S FACTION SUFFICIENTLY TO MAKE MOST OF THEM WILLING TO ACCEPT EVEN FUKUDA -- IF HE COULD TOPPLE MIKI. (FUKUDA IS WIDELY BELIEVED RESPONSIBLE FOR THE 1974 MAGAZINE ARTICLE WHICH LED TO TANAKA'S FALL FROM THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP.)

4. UP TO NOW THE ABSENCE OF AN AGREED SUCCESSOR HAS BEEN ONE OF THE MAIN

FACTORS IN MIKI'S CONTINUING IN OFFICE. THE OHIRA STATEMENT IS SEEN HERE AS CLEAR EVIDENCE THAT OHIRA IS NOT ONLY WILLING TO ACQUIESCE IN A FUKUDA PRIME MINISTERSHIP, BUT WILL WORK WITH FUKUDA TO ACHIEVE THAT OBJECTIVE. PRECISELY HOW OR ON WHAT GROUNDS FUKUDA AND OHIRA WILL MOUNT THEIR CHALLENGE REMAINS TO BE SEEN, BUT THEY ARE DETERMINED TO SUCCEED BEFORE AN EXTRAORDINARY DIET SESSION IS CALLED, PRESUMABLY SOMETIME IN LATE AUGUST OR EARLY SEPTEMBER. AND THE CHALLENGERS APPEAR TO HAVE CONSIDERABLE CONFIDENCE: A FUKUDA CONFIDANT TOLD AN EMBOFF AUGUST 8 THAT FUKUDA NOW EXPECTS MIKI TO FALL AUGUST 25 OR SO. BUT FURTHER LOCKHEED INVESTIGATION DEVELOPMENTS -- SPECIFICALLY THE ADDITIONAL ARRESTS EXPECTED IMMINENTLY -- COULD SERIOUSLY AFFECT THIS ESTIMATE AND EVEN THE EVENT ITSELF.
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